

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 /053 W

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R 181537Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO AMEMBASSY LISBON

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5484

USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 1411

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EO 11652 N/A

SUBJ: SUMMARY OF DUTCH PRESS COVERAGE OF ABORTIVE COUP  
IN LISBON, MARCH 11, 1975

REF: LISBON 1381

1. ALL LEADING NATIONAL DAILIES GAVE THIS ITEM FRONT PAGE  
HEADLINE TREATMENT, ACCOMPANIED BY MANY PHOTOGRAPHS. EVERY  
LEADING PAPER RAN EDITORIAL COMMENT. BELOW A SUMMARY OF  
MAIN HEADLINES, COMMENT, ETC:

2. "DE TELEGRAAF" (INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE) 3.12.1975  
"PURPOSE OF COUP WAS DE SPINOLA'S RETURN"  
"EX-PRESIDENT WAS TOO MODERATE FOR THE LEFTISTS"  
THIS PAPER DESCRIBED IT AS A 'MINI-COUP', WHICH FAILED  
BECAUSE OF LACK OF SUPPORT FROM WITHIN THE PORTUGUESE ARMY.  
THE PAPER'S MADRID CORRESPONDENT REPORTS THAT THE COUP  
WAS LONG EXPECTED. IN LEFTIST CIRCLES IT WAS FEARED  
THAT EXTREME RIGHT WING ELEMENTS, SUPPORTERS OF THE  
PREVIOUS REGIME AND "CIA AGENTS" WERE PLOTTING TO PREPARE  
A COUP. THE RESULT OF THE COUP MAY BE THAT THE LEFTIST  
MILITARY OFFICERS WILL CARRY OUT BLOODY PURGES IN ORDER  
TO RENDER THEIR POLITICAL OPPONENTS PERMANENTLY HARMLESS.  
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ALSO MENTIONED ARE GENERAL DE CARVALHO'S INSINUATIONS THAT

THE US WAS INVOLVED IN THE COUP, AND HIS ADVICE TO AMBASSADOR CARLUCCI TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

EDIROTIRAL:

"ATTEMPT IN PORTUGAL BORN OF DESPAIR"

"...AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE DE SPINOLA TO POWER CANNOT BE REGARDED AS 'REACTIONARY', BUT RATHER AS AN ATTEMPT ON BEHALF OF A SINCERE DEMOCRAT. DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL ARE EXTREMELY PRECARIOUS...IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PRESSURE FROM THE LEFT IS CAUSING ORGANIZED DISTURBANCES. THE COMMUNISTS WOULD, ACCORDING TO OPINION POLLS, HAVE NO CHANCE AT ALL OF COMING INTO POWER BY MEANS OF FREE ELECTIONS AND ARE TRYING TO REACH THEIR AIMS BY TERRORISM...THIS RECENT COUP MUST BE REGARDED AS AN ACTION BORN OF DESPAIR THAT TIDE CAN BE TURNED IN PORTUGAL."

3.13.1975

"PORTUGAL TAKES FIRST STEP TOWARDS LEFTIST DICTATORSHIP"

THIS PAPER GIVES A DESCRIPTION OF THE FURTHER COURSE OF EVENTS IN PORTUGAL SINCE THE COUP.

3. "NRC HANDELSBLAD" (INDEPENDENT LIBERAL) 3.12.1975

THIS PAPER MENTIONS THAT THE LEFTIST GENERAL DE CARVALHO ANNOUNCED ON THE TV THAT THE US AMBASSADOR WOULD BE WISE TO LEAVE PORTUGAL IMMEDIATELY, AS HIS SAFETY COULD NO LONGER BE GUARANTEED. SEVERAL MINUTES AFTER THE BROADCAST AMBASSADOR CARLUCCI TELEPHONED DE CARVALHO, AND THE AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY MADE A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS EXPRESSING HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE PROTECTION WHICH THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROVIDE FOR HIM. LATER ROBERT FUNSETH, SPOKESMAN OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT, DECLARED IN WASHINGTON THAT THE US EMBASSY IN LISBON AND THE US ITSELF HAD HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH THE COUP.

3.13.1975

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THIS PAPER'S LISBON CORRESPONDENT REPORTS THAT THE SITUATION IS CHAOTIC AND CONFUSING, BUT SAYS FURTHER:

"THE ONLY CLEAR CONCLUSION WHICH ONE CAN DRAW AT PRESENT IS THAT THE MFA, THE MOVEMENT OF THE FIGHTING FORCES, SUPPORTED BY THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE, HAS WON A COMPLETE VICTORY AGAINST THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES WITHIN THE

ARMY, AND THEREBY PROVED IT IS INDISPENSABLE AS GUARDIAN OF THE STILL DELICATE PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY. BECAUSE OF THE STUPID AND BADLY ORGANIZED COUNTER-REVOLUTION THE POSITION OF THE MFA HAS BECOME UNASSAILABLE, AND PORTUGAL'S FUTURE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE LAID OUT BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES."

EDITORIAL COMMENT:

"...WHAT IS WORRYING IS THAT THE POLICY OF THE MFA WILL LEAVE THE WAY OPEN FOR THE COMMUNISTS. PORTUGAL NEED HAVE NO DOUBTS THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WILL MEAN THE END OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE AND NATO. THIS IN ITS TURN WILL LEAD TO ISOLATION FOR PORTUGAL, STAGNATION IN THE NECESSARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THUS THE INEVITABILITY OF TURNING TO RUSSIA FOR AID..."

4. "ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD" (INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVES) 3.12.1975

"BOMBS BURST IN PORTUGAL"

THIS PAPER ALSO MENTIONS THE VEILED ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE US EMBASSY IN LISBON AND THE US GOVERNMENT'S REACTION.

"HUNT FOR CONSPIRATORS"

"ARRESTS OF 'RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS' IN PORTUGAL"

EDITORIAL COMMENT:

"...THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE ARMY BETWEEN CONSERVATIVES AND RADICALS WILL, BECAUSE OF THE TIMELY DISCOVERY OF THE RIGHT-WING PLOT, NOW DIE DOWN. IT MUST BY NOW BE CLEAR TO UNCLASSIFIED

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EVERYONE THAT ULTRA RIGHT-WING NO LONGER HAS ANY CHANCE. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE OTHER HAND WILL INCREASE AND POSSIBLY LEAD TO FURTHER BLOODSHED... THIS STRUGGLE BELONGS TO THE BIRTHPANGS OF A DEMOCRACY. ATTEMPTS AT A COUP CERTAINLY DO NOT".

5. "DE VOLKSKRANT" (CATHOLIC LABOR, LEFTISIT) 3.12.1975

"STRIFE BURSTS LOOES IN PORTUGUESE ARMY"

THIS PAPER POINTS OUT THAT THE COUP CAME AT A MOMENT THAT THERE HAD COME INTO BEING AN ALMOST INSUPERABLE BREAK BETWEEN THE RADICAL AND THE MODERATE ELEMENTS OF THE MFA. MENTION IS MADE ALSO IN THIS PAPER OF THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE US EMBASSY, THE VOERAGE BEING THE SAME AS IN THE OTHER PAPERS REVIEWED ABOVE.

EDITORIAL COMMENT:

"...IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT THE MFA CAN DEAL WITH THE COUP AND ITS EFFECTS WITH THE SAME WISDOM AND ELASTICITY AS IT SHOWED DURING THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION. IF THE MOVEMENT CAN RECOVER ITS STRENGTH AND UNITY IT CAN PLAY A MORE CREDIBLE PART AS THE PROTECTOR OF PORTUGAL'S ECONOMY AND DEMOCRACY, A PART IT MUST KEEP PLAYING UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS."

6. "HET PAROOL" (INDEPENDENT LIBERAL) 3.12.1975

THIS PAPER STATES THAT ACCORDING TO OBSERVERS THE FAILURE OF THE RIGHT-WING COUP HAS STRENGTHENED THE POSITION OF THE RADICAL OFFICERS. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE COUP WAS PERHAPS A 'COUP DE THEATRE', ORGANIZED BY LEFTIST OFFICERS, ALSO BECAUSE OF ITS INEFFICIENT SET-UP. SAME COVERAGE IS GIVEN TO THE ACCUSATION AGAINST THE US EMBASSY.

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 /053 W

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R 181537Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO AMEMBASSY LISBON

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5485

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 THE HAGUE 1411

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EDITORIAL COMMENT:

"...THE QUESTION OF WHETHER SOCIALISM OR DEMOCRACY WILL HAVE PRIORITY IN THE NEW PORTUGAL IS KEEPING THE ARMED FORCES AT LOGGERHEADS. AS IN ALL CASES THE

MEMBERS OF THESE FORCES ARE THE LAST PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DECIDE ABOUT SUCH VITAL QUESTIONS...AS LONG AS THEY LAY CLAIM TO THE ROLE OF NATIONAL ARBITRATOR THEY WILL EXPERIENCE THE GREATER DIFFICULTY IN STICKING TO THE RULES."

7. "TROUW" (CALVINIST) 3.12.1975

THIS PAPER MENTIONS THAT AN OFFICIAL SPANISH SPOKESMAN DENIED CATEGORICALLY YESTERDAY THAT DE SPINOLA HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE ABORTIVE COUP. THIS PAPER TOO MENTIONS THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE US EMBASSY, THE COVERAGE BEING SIMILAR.

EDITORIAL COMMENT:

"...IT IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS WILL PROVIDE COMPLETE CLARITY, THIS BECAUSE OF THE ENORMOUS DIVISIONS AMONG THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE. IF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE ARMY CAN GIVE PROTECTION FOR THE TIME BEING, SO THAT DISCUSSION CAN BE CONTINUED, THIS IS A GOOD THING. IF, HOWEVER, THE ARMY WANTS TO CONTINUE INDEFINITELY AT THE TOP, THEN PORTUGAL WILL BECOME A MILITARY CAMP, HARDLY TO BE CONSIDERED MUCH MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN A MAOIST PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY OR A SOUTH AMERICAN BANANA REPUBLIC."

8. "HET VRIJE VOLK" (LEFTIST-ORIENTED)

ONLY PAPER WITH PART OF HEADLINES:

"ACCUSATION: US WAS BEHIND IT ALL"

THE ACTUAL COVERAGE ON THIS POINT IS SIMILAR TO THE OTHER PAPERS.

COMMENT: (BERT STOOP, FOREIGN EDITOR)

"...TAKING EVERYTHING INTO ACCOUNT IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THE RIGHT-WING COUNTER-REVOLUTION, NEARLY WITHOUT BLOODSHED AS IT WAS, WILL PROVE TO HAVE HAD A PURIFYING INFLUENCE ON PORTUGAL'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE...

...THE ARMY IN PORTUGAL IS SOMETHING LIKE A LABORATORY WHERE THE DIFFICULT EXPERIMENT IS BEING CONDUCTED OF MAKING A DEMOCRACY OF A CALCIFIED AUTHORITARIAN STATE...

IT WOULD SEEM WISE, HOWEVER, FOR THE AUTHORITIES TO TRY

TO CHECK THE SMALL EXTREMIST AND ANARCHIST GROUPS WHICH  
ARE USING VIOLENCE AGAINST THE NON-LEFTIST POLITICAL GROUPS,  
FOR THESE GROUPS LEND STRENGTH TO THE RIGHT-WING'S  
ARGUMENT THAT PORTUGAL IS ON THE BRINK OF A LEFTIST  
DICTATORSHIP..."  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, TEXT  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 18 MAR 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 6  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Reference:** 75 LISBON 1381  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** hartledg  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 18 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <18 JUN 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2004 by hartledg>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SUMMARY OF DUTCH PRESS COVERAGE OF ABORTIVE COUP IN LISBON, MARCH 11, 1975  
**TAGS:** PINS, NL, PO  
**To:** LISBON  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006